

## Editorial

# Challenges and Prospects of Sustainability in the Context of Global Health

Vesna Bjegovic-Mikanovic<sup>1</sup>  and Ulrich Laaser<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Medicine, School of Public Health, University of Belgrade, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; vesna.bjegovic-mikanovic@med.bg.ac.rs

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Public Health, University of Bielefeld, D-33501 Bielefeld, Germany

\* Correspondence: ulrich.laaser@uni-bielefeld.de

We introduced this Special Issue entitled “Challenges and Prospects of Sustainability in the Context of Global Health”, published by MDPI, about two years ago with the following excerpt:

“The global health challenges are numerous and complex and concern the common problems of all people on the planet. Global warming, global divisions, and global security are considered to be of strategic importance, as they represent a generational challenge for sustainable development and future generations’ health. Numerous global health challenges are interrelated, such as global warming and natural and human-made disasters, floods, drinking water shortages, and deforestation, contributing to the loss of demographic balance, economic divisions, forced migration, poverty, and hunger endangering entire populations. At the same time, in the analysis of global health problems and challenges, there is a well-known rule that is expressed as a ratio of 10/90 and which represents a considerable limitation in overcoming global health problems: ninety percent of financial resources are directed to improving the health of only ten percent of the world’s population. The burden of not only contagious but also chronic non-communicable diseases and injuries affects the poorest countries in the world”.

We are grateful for the ten contributions published, which came from all over the globe and mark key issues in our global future. In a globalized world, there are no isolated places; problems and solutions transcend national borders, require international cooperation, and lead to a growing interconnectedness of countries. Global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide. It emphasizes transnational health issues, determinants, and solutions; it involves many disciplines within and beyond the health sciences; and it is a synthesis of population-based prevention with the efficient provision of individual-level clinical care [1].

Today, the Sustainable Development Goals [2] are a cornerstone for a minimum set of standards in moving toward global equity in health services delivery, and leadership in global health issues encompasses all levels of society.

Global health requires cooperation, coordination, and opportunities to exchange ideas and learn from experiences and examples of good practice. The goal is to develop joint action that will protect and improve the health of all people in the world. It is an extensive multi-sectoral area that connects the main areas of development policy, humanitarian aid, research and health, trade, and international policy; the ultimate goal is global health justice [2]. Today, health has become a global priority, resulting from undoubted scientific evidence on the connection between health and economic development.

Donchin et al. (2024) show the implementation of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals in the framework of the Healthy City Network in Israel. Streifeneder et al. (2024) provide—based on experience in Austria—an instrument for sustainable pandemic management, the Vulnerability Assessment Index, with one created for each Austrian



**Citation:** Bjegovic-Mikanovic, V.; Laaser, U. Challenges and Prospects of Sustainability in the Context of Global Health. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 3061. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16073061>

Received: 2 April 2024

Accepted: 5 April 2024

Published: 7 April 2024



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

municipality. Another key problem is investigated by Ou et al. (2023) shedding light on the positive and negative consequences of trade openness with regard to increasing environmental pollution and its negative impact on population health. Mone et al. (2023) complements the following publications in this collection by identifying barriers experienced by children in Albania in accessing health care services, and Cvjetkovic et al. (2022) identify the key role of societal distrust in five countries of the western Balkans, determined by different factors in each of the five populations. Nitzan et al. (2023) focus on one of the most important sequelae of armed conflict and, notably, the climate, i.e., food shortage. The foundation of the FOR (Food System, One Health, and Resilience) approach provides a solution. Pattanshetty et al. (2023) analyze the role of health diplomacy in protecting the health of non-belligerents, referring to the ongoing conflict in Sudan. An early mind-changer is “the creation of standardized, impactful, evidence-based curricula and resources addressing climate change and health issues in schools”, as Ramadani et al. (2023) underline. Khanal et al. (2023) point to the insufficient analysis of the interlinkage between health equity and climate change and the fragmented policy process in this regard.

Finally, Professor Tit Albrecht (2023) from Slovenia, President (elect) of the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), set the tone when he wrote the following: “The COVID-19 pandemic deepened challenges and opened new fronts. . . Apart from the pre-existing problems, we are now also facing new military conflicts, interrupted supply chains, even in medicines supplies, as well as the worsening of climate change. . . resistance to proven public health interventions”.

It cannot be overstated how important it is to introduce global health issues into medical and public health curricula, considering the critical status of our planet. These issues at stake must be analyzed from epidemiological, sociological, and medical points of view [3].

Prof. Dr. Vesna Bjegovic-Mikanovic

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Laaser

Guest Editors

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### List of Contributions:

1. Donchin, M.; Gurewitz, L.; Wetzler, S.L. Implementation of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among the Member Cities of the “Healthy Cities Network” in Israel. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 310. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16010310>.
2. Streifeneder, V.; Kienberger, S.; Reichel, S.; Hölbling, D. Socio-Economic Vulnerability Assessment for Supporting a Sustainable Pandemic Management in Austria. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 78. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16010078>.
3. Ou, J.; Zheng, Z.; Zhang, N. A Study of the Effect of Trade Openness on Population Health: Empirical Evidence from China. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 12571. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151612571>.
4. Mone, I.; Vasil, S.; Alia, A.; Xinxo, S.; Muça, K.; Burazeri, G. Socio-Demographic Correlates of Barriers to Access Healthcare Services among Children in Post-Communist Albania. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 8455. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15118455>.
5. Cvjetkovic, S.; Stojkovic, V.J.; Mandic-Rajcevic, S.; Matovic-Miljanovic, S.; Jankovic, J.; Vranes, A.J.; Stevanovic, A.; Stamenkovic, Z. Societal Trust Related to COVID-19 Vaccination: Evidence from Western Balkans. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 13547. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142013547>.
6. Nitzan, D.; Andreuzza, B.N.; Chattopadhyay, D. The Food Systems, One Health, and Resilience (FOR) Approach—Led by the FOR-Runners. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 13889. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151813889>.
7. Pattanshetty, S.; Bhatt, K.; Inamdar, A.; Dsouza, V.; Chattu, V.K.; Brand, H. Health Diplomacy as a Tool to Build Resilient Health Systems in Conflict Settings—A Case of Sudan. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 13625. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151813625>.
8. Ramadani, L.; Khanal, S.; Boeckmann, M. Content Focus and Effectiveness of Climate Change and Human Health Education in Schools: A Scoping Review. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 10373. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151310373>.

9. Khanal, S.; Ramadani, L.; Boeckmann, M. Health Equity in Climate Change and Health Policies: A Systematic Review. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 10653. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151310653>.
10. Albrecht, T. Challenges to Global Health Emerging from the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 7633. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15097633>.

## References

1. Koplan, J.P.; Bond, T.C.; Merson, M.H.; Reddy, K.S.; Rodriguez, M.H.; Sewankambo, N.K.; Wasserheit, J.N. Towards a common definition of global health. *Lancet* **2009**, *373*, 1993–1995. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
2. Prah Ruger, J. *Global Health Justice and Governance*, Online ed.; Oxford Academic: Oxford, UK, 2018. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. Laaser, U.; Beluli, F. Special Volume 2016, A Global Public Health Curriculum (2nd Edition). *South East. Eur. J. Public Health (SEEJPH)* **2016**. Available online: <https://www.biejournals.de/index.php/seejph/article/view/1828> (accessed on 1 February 2024).

**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.